

COWIE

July 20, 1959

Dear Dean--

Can you give me any more information than already appears in the opus magnus concerning the utilization of sugar phosphates by *E. coli*? There is a rather provocative statement atop p.75, and I wondered if that had been cleared up. Could the large water space for the hexose-phosphates have been enlarged by transient shock? My main concern for this at the moment is for the possible use of phosphorylated galactose derivatives in typing the enzymatic blocks in Gal mutants with intact cells -- we badly need some ~~am~~ simplified methods.

1958 was certainly a discouraging year for us with respect to the prospects of scientific microbiology in the space program-- but 1959 seems to be working out much better. It looks as if NASA itself is awakening to the hazards and the challenge, and it may be getting down to business with managing the first step. We had a technical meeting on decontamination procedures here last week, and there is a good chance that the Fort Detrick group will be technical direction for them-- we couldn't have hoped for a more constructive and practical outcome. If they do handle it, we can concentrate on the more interesting scientific experiments with some assurance the tools will try to be clean. Dick Davies at Jet Propulsion Labs. has been one of the most constructive contacts we've had on this -- I hope you two get to know one another.

One of the penalties has been more than a little drag on my own time-- I can't say though that I was quite innocent of the possibility, and I hope it's worth it. The early Mars mission has been temporarily scrapped, but the moon-landing experiments are being shaped up: the soonest ones (1960-61) by a group chaired by Bob Jastrow whom you may know (formerly at Naval Res. Lab., then Vanguard, now NASA). I don't think there will (or need) be any strictly biological experiments the first round, but I have some hopes the operative field will be kept more or less clean, and some of the preliminaries may be informative. I was also a little surprised to have a letter from Bronk asking me to join the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Space Science Board itself. I am not sure whether the Board itself has very decisive influence, but it can be a platform for scientific opinion and perhaps indirectly try to temper some of the current nonsense. The significant point about this is its encouragement about the climate of opinion. Fortunately I have a ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ date east about the same time and I'm planning to attend the next meeting Oct. 27th and hope to have a chance to see you then.

NASA and the administration generally seem to have firmly settled on 'man-in-space' for the AASL priority ~~xxx~~ less for scientific or military reasons than explorative. Have you any idea who makes this decision: I'd thought it was the Academy but now I doubt it, and it must be the President's Advisory Board. (Current issue of Fortune pretty well illustrates this.) I suppose it would be futile ~~x~~ to try to make a more temperate approach -- and I don't think I'd want to excise MIS altogether even if it were possible -- but it would still be helpful to know who's calling the shots.